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REMARKS

Claims 1-78 remain pending (with claims 24-46, 66-74, and 77 withdrawn). Applicants therefore seek reconsideration of examined claims 1-23, 47-65, 75, 76, and 78.

Amendment

Claims 1, 4, 47, 48, 57, 75, 76, and 78 have been amended to more clearly recite the present invention and to improve their form. Specifically, claims 1, 47, 76, and 78 have been amended to further define the modes of operation. Support for the changes can be found at least in the description of Figs. 7-9. These and other claims have been amended to improve their form, in particular, for the claims directed to a machine readable storage medium. Instead of referring the instructions as method steps, they are catered in terms of "codes." No new matter has been introduced.

Art Rejection

Claims 1-23, 47-65, 75, 76, and 78 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Inoue (USP 5,159,546) and Nyffenegger (USP 5,826,869). First, applicants traverse these rejections to the extent that the examiner does not explain how the claims are being rejected. Specifically, the examiner does not set forth what these references teach and what features are missing vis-a-vis the claimed invention. Indeed, these rejections appear to be ambiguous in that the examiner appears to indicate that these references disclose all of the claimed features while applying § 103. Second, applicants traverse these rejections because neither Inoue nor Nyffenegger would have disclosed or taught the sheet feeding controlling called for in the claims.

Claims 1, 47, 76, and 78 call for controlling the feeding of insert sheets from a plurality of inserter trays among at least two sheet feeding modes, including a first sheet feeding mode in which the sheet feeding controller controls the feeders to sequentially feed the insert sheets from a different one of the inserter trays every time an insert sheet is fed, and a second feeding mode in which the sheet feeding controller controls the feeders to sequentially feed the insert sheets from

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only one of the inserter trays unless the one inserter tray is empty. The applied references simply do not disclose or suggest such aspect of the claimed invention.

The examiner states that Inoue discloses a plurality of inserter trays, referring to Fig. 30, element 2002. Applicants disagree. Referring to Fig. 16, Inoue discloses inserter trays 1006-1, 1006-2, 1006-3. Although Inoue loosely refers these trays as inserting trays in columns 21-23, nonetheless, it is clear from the disclosure that these trays hold sheets hold recording pages to be fed to an imaging device for copying operation. These trays do not correspond to the inserter trays referred to in the claims. Indeed, the inserter trays hold insert sheets, which are for inserting between the recording sheets transported from an image forming apparatus. As Inoue does not disclose controlling feeding of insert sheets, applicants submit that Inoue would not have taught the claimed invention. Moreover, even if the Inoue's trays 1006 were deemed to be inserter trays, it still would not have taught the above described first and second modes of insertion.

Although Nyffenegger discloses a series of insert hoppers a-n, which could possibly be deemed to correspond to the insert trays, nonetheless, Nyffenegger does not disclose any modes of controlling the feeding of the insert sheets. Accordingly, claims 1 and 47 also define over this reference.

Claims 48, 57, 75 call for controlling the feeding of the insert sheets from an inserter tray in at least two stacking modes, without interrupting a job being performed while reloading the insert sheets in the inserter tray. The applied references do not disclose or suggest this feature. The examiner appears to have attempted to address this feature in the rejection, but there is no nexus provided between this feature and the examiner's comments regarding what these references disclose. Applicants submit that these claims clearly define over the applied references.

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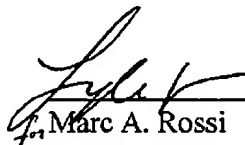
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Conclusion

Applicants submit that claims 1-23, 47-65, 75, 76, and 78 patentably distinguish over the applied references for the foregoing reasons, and thus urge the examiner to issue an early Notice of Allowance. Should the examiner have any issues concerning this reply or any other outstanding issues remaining in this application, applicants urge the examiner to contact the undersigned to expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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MARKED UP VERSION SHOWING CHANGES

Claims 1, 4, 47, 48, 57, 75, 76, and 78 have been amended as follows:

--1. (Amended) A sheet handling apparatus comprising:

a plurality of inserter trays for having insert sheets stacked thereon, said insert sheets being inserted between the recording sheets transported from an image forming apparatus having an image forming section;

a sheet feeding controller that controls feeding of the insert sheets stacked on the plurality of inserter trays; [and]

a plurality of feeders that feed the insert sheets stacked on respective inserter trays; and

a sheet feeding mode setting device that sets one of a plurality of sheet feeding modes defining respectively a plurality of stacking manners, [for stacking plural types of the insert sheets on said plurality of inserter trays and a plurality of sheet feeding manners corresponding respectively to said stacking manners and employed by said sheet feeding controller]

wherein said sheet feeding modes include at least a first sheet feeding mode in which said sheet feeding controller controls said feeders to sequentially feed the insert sheets from a different one of the inserter trays every time an insert sheet is fed, and a second feeding mode in which said sheet feeding controller controls said feeders to sequentially feed the insert sheets from only one of the inserter trays unless the one inserter tray is empty.--

--4. (Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to claim 3, wherein in said first sheet feeding mode, said sheet feeding controller sequentially feeds the insert sheets sheet by sheet from one of said plurality of inserter trays, and then changes to another of said inserter trays[an inserter tray from which the insert sheets are to be fed, from said one to a next one of said plurality of inserter trays].--

--47. (Amended) A machine readable storage medium storing a program for [executing a method of] controlling a sheet handling apparatus comprising a plurality of inserter trays for stacking insert sheets thereon, said insert sheets being inserted between said recording sheets

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transported from a sheet handling apparatus having a sheet handling section, [said method comprising the steps of] the program including codes for:

controlling feeding of said insert sheets stacked on [said plurality of] the respective inserter trays; and

setting one of a plurality of sheet feeding modes defining respectively a plurality of stacking manners, [for stacking plural types of the insert sheets on each of said plurality of inserter trays and a plurality of sheet feeding manners corresponding respectively to said stacking manners and employed by said step of controlling feeding said insert sheets]

wherein said feeding modes include at least a first sheet feeding mode in which the inserts sheets are sequentially fed from a different inserter tray every time an insert sheet is fed, and a second feeding mode in which the insert sheets are sequentially fed from only one of the inserter trays unless the one inserter tray is empty.

48. (Amended) A sheet handling apparatus comprising:

at least one inserter tray for having insert sheets stacked thereon, said insert sheets being inserted between the recording sheets transported from a sheet handling apparatus having a sheet handling section[n];

a sheet feeder that feeds the insert sheets stacked on said inserter tray;

a stacking manner input terminal that selects a desired stacking manner from at least two kinds of stacking manners, for stacking the insert sheets on said inserter tray; and

a controller [responsive to selection of] operable when a predetermined stacking manner is selected by said stacking manner input terminal, for controlling said sheet feeder to feed the insert sheets from said inserter tray without interrupting a job being executed when insert sheets are re-stacked on said inserter tray after exhaustion of all the insert sheets stacked on said inserter tray.--

--57. (Amended) A sheet handling apparatus comprising:

at least one inserter tray for stacking thereon insert sheets to be inserted between

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recording sheets having images formed thereon in a main body of an image forming apparatus;
and

a sheet feeder for feeding the insert sheets stacked on the inserter tray;

wherein [when]while a predetermined stacking manner is selected from at least two kinds of stacking manners for stacking insert sheets on said inserter tray, said sheet feeder is controlled to feed insert sheets from said inserter tray without stopping a job being executed if the insert sheets stacked on said inserter tray are exhausted and thereafter insert sheets are re-stacked on said inserter tray.--

--75. (Amended) A machine readable storage medium storing a program for [executing an insert] controlling insert of insert sheets in [method applied to] a sheet handling apparatus comprising at least one inserter tray for having the insert sheets stacked thereon, said insert sheets being inserted between the recording sheets transported from an image forming section, and a sheet feeder that feeds the insert sheets stacked on said inserter tray, [said insert control method comprising the steps of]the program including codes for:

selecting a desired stacking manner from at least two kinds of stacking manners, for stacking the insert sheets on said inserter tray, and

controlling said sheet feeder to feed the insert sheets from said inserter tray without interrupting a job being executed when insert sheets are re-stacked on said inserter tray after exhaustion of all the insert sheets stacked on said inserter tray while a predetermined stacking manner is selected by said stacking manner selecting step.

76. (Amended) A sheet handling apparatus comprising:

a plurality of inserter trays that hold insert sheets which are to be inserted between sheets transported from an image forming apparatus;

a plurality of feeders that feed the insert sheets stacked on said inserter trays respectively;

an instruction inputting terminal that inputs an instruction selecting one of a plurality of sheet feeding modes including a first mode for plural types of insert sheets stacked on said

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inserter trays respectively and a second mode for plural types of insert sheets stacked on at least one of said inserter trays; and

a sheet feeding controller that controls said [plurality of feeders to feed the insert sheets from said plurality of inserter trays in accordance with the instruction inputted from said instruction inputting terminal]feeders to sequentially feed the insert sheets from a different one of the inserter tray every time an insert sheet is fed, and controls said feeders to sequentially feed the insert sheets from only one of the inserter trays unless the one inserter tray is empty.--

--78. (Amended) A machine readable storage medium storing a program for [executing a method of]controlling a sheet handling apparatus including a plurality of inserter trays that hold insert sheets which are to be inserted between sheets transported from an image forming apparatus, and a plurality of feeders that feed the insert sheets stacked on said inserter trays respectively, [said method comprising the steps of]the program including codes for:

inputting an instruction selecting one of a plurality of sheet feeding modes including a first mode for plural types of insert sheets stacked on said inserter trays respectively and a second mode for plural types of insert sheets stacked on at least one of said inserter trays; and

controlling said [plurality of feeders to feed the insert sheets from said plurality of inserter trays in accordance with the instruction inputted from said instruction inputting terminal]feeders to sequentially feed the insert sheets from a different one of the inserter tray every time an insert sheet is fed, and to sequentially feed the insert sheets from only one of the inserter trays unless the one inserter tray is empty.--